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AN

ACCOUNT

OF THE

PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION

OF

ELIZ. WOODCOCK.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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ACCOUNT

OF THE

PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION

OF

ELIZ. WOODCOCK,

WHO SURVIVED A CONFINEMENT

UNDER THE SNOW,

OF NEARLY EIGHT DAYS AND NIGHTS,

In the Month of FEBRUARY 1799.

IN TWO PARTS.

By THOMAS VERNEY OKES, Surgeon.

——— "From the bellowing East,
In this dire Season, oft the Whirlwind's wing
Sweeps up the burthen of whole Wintry Plains
At one wide waft;" and now fatigued, and stiff
With cold, the hapless Wand'rer in his way
"The billowy Tempest whelms."

THOMSON'S WINTER, 268, &c. London, 1779.

The THIRD EDITION.

Cambridge,

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BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

ACCOUNT, &c.

THE attention of the Public would not have been ſolicited to a ſubject, that has already nearly exhauſted their curioſity, had it not appeared to me deſirable that they ſhould be furniſhed on ſuch an occaſion with as correct a ſtatement of facts as poſſible. Upon ſo ſurpriſing a circumſtance, as a perſon's being found alive after being ſhut up above a week in a Snow-Drift, it was to be expected that reports would be circulated tending rather to feed the impatience of enquiry than ſupply preciſe and accurate information. This has been very much the caſe, and more than one publication has already appeared. I have therefore been favoured by the Rev. Mr. Holme, Miniſter of the pariſh to which this unfortunate woman belongs, with a particular detail of the circumſtances relating to this ſingular, though not unparalleled, event. Theſe circumſtances have been carefully collected by him from various interviews and converſations,

which he has had with the *ſubject* of the following narration, and from very many particular inquiries which he has made of every perſon concerned in any part of this tranſaction. And as no incident, of the ſmalleſt importance, has been overlooked or omitted, that could in any reſpect ſerve to illuſtrate the ſituation and feelings of this unfortunate woman, from the firſt moment of her ſufferings to the preſent time, the Public, it is hoped, may now be conſidered as in poſſeſſion of an account ſufficiently minute and authentic.

Elizabeth Woodcock, aged 42 years, went on horſeback from Impington to Cambridge, on Saturday, being market day, the 2d of February, 1799. On her return home in the evening, between ſix and ſeven o'clock, being about half a mile from her own houſe, her horſe ſtarted at a ſudden light,* which proceeded moſt probably from a Meteor, a phœnomenon, which, at this ſeaſon of the year, not unfrequently happens. She

* " Seen thro' the turbid fluctuating air,
" The ſtars obtuſe emit a ſhiver'd ray;
" Or frequent ſeen to ſhoot athwart the gloom,
" And long behind them trail the whitening blaze."
Thomſon's Winter, line 126, &c. London, 1779.

was herſelf ſtruck with the light, and exclaimed, Good God! what can this be!" It was a very inclement ſtormy night, a bleak wind blew buiſterouſly from the N. E. The ground was covered by the great quantities of ſnow that had fallen during the day, yet it was not ſpread uniformly over the ſurface. The deepeſt ditches were many of them completely filled up, whilſt in the open fields, away from the trees and hedges, there was but a thin covering; but in the roads and lanes, and many narrow and incloſed parts, it had accumulated to a conſiderable depth: no where yet ſo as to render the ways impaſſable, but ſtill enough to retard and impede the traveller. The horſe, upon his ſtarting, ran backward, and approached to the brink of a ditch, which the poor woman recollected; and fearing leſt the animal in his fright ſhould plunge into it, very prudently diſmounted with all expedition. Her intention was to walk, and lead the horſe home, but he ſtarted again and broke from her. She repeated her attempt to take hold of the bridle; but the horſe, ſtill under the impreſſion of fear, turned ſuddenly out of the road and directed his ſteps to the right over the open common field. She followed him in hopes of quickly overtaking him, but unfortunately ſhe loſt one

of her ſhoes in the ſnow: ſhe was already wearied with the exertion ſhe had made, and beſides had a heavy baſket on her arm, containing ſeveral articles of domeſtic conſumption, which ſhe had brought from market. By theſe means her purſuit of the horſe was greatly impeded; ſhe however perſiſted and followed him through an opening in a hedge, a little beyond which ſhe overtook him, (about a quarter of a mile from the place where ſhe alighted) and, taking hold of the bridle, made another attempt to lead him home. But ſhe had not re-traced her ſteps farther than a thicket, which lies contiguous to the ſaid hedge,* when ſhe found herſelf ſo much fatigued and exhauſted, her hands and feet, particularly her left foot, which was without a ſhoe, ſo very much benumed, that ſhe was unable to proceed farther. Sitting down then upon the ground in this ſtate, and letting go the bridle, "Tinker," ſhe ſaid, calling the horſe by his name, I am too much tired to go any farther, you muſt go home without me;" and exclaimed, "Lord have mercy upon me; what will become

* Parallel to a part of this hedge, and contiguous to it, is a ſmall thicket of black and white thorn, which having been cut down a few years ago are now grown up to the height of about five feet.

of me!" The ground on which ſhe ſat was upon a level with the common field, cloſe under the thicket on the ſouth weſt. She well knew the ſituation of it, and what was its diſtance from and bearing with reſpect to her own houſe. There was then but a ſmall quantity of ſnow drifted near her, but it was beginning to accumulate, and did actually accumulate ſo rapidly, that when Cheſterton bell rang at 8 o'clock ſhe was completely encloſed and hemmed in by it. The depth of the ſnow in which ſhe was enveloped was about ſix feet in a perpendicular direction, over her head between two and three.

This is the ſecond ſtage of this tragical event: her impriſonment was now complete, for ſhe was incapable of making any effectual attempt to extricate herſelf, and in addition to her fatigue and cold, her clothes were ſtiffened by the froſt: reſigning herſelf therefore calmly to the neceſſity of her bad ſituation, ſhe ſat awaiting the dawn of the following day. To the beſt of her recollection ſhe ſlept very little during the firſt night, or indeed any of the ſucceeding nights or days, except on Friday the 8th. Early the next morning ſhe diſtinctly heard the ringing of a bell at one of the villages at a ſmall diſtance. Her mind was

now turned (as it was moſt natural) to the thoughts of her preſervation, and buſied itſelf in concerting expedients, by means of which any one who chanced to come near the place might diſcover her. On the morning of the 3d, the firſt after her impriſonment, obſerving before her a circular hole * in the ſnow, about two feet in length and a half a foot in diameter, running obliquely upwards through the maſs, ſhe broke off a branch of the buſh, which was cloſe to her, and with it thruſt her handkerchief through the hole, and hung it, as a ſignal of diſtreſs, upon one of the uppermoſt twigs that remained uncovered; an expedient which will be ſeen in the ſequel to have occaſioned her diſcovery.

She bethought herſelf, at the ſame time, that the change of the moon was near; and having an almanack in her pocket, ſhe took it out, though with great difficulty, and conſulting it, found

* The poor woman ſays that the extremity of this hole was cloſed up with a thin covering of ſnow or ice, on the firſt morning, which eaſily tranſmitted the light. When ſhe put out her handkerchief ſhe broke it, and in conſequence of which, the external air being admitted, ſhe felt herſelf very cold. On the ſecond morning it was again cloſed up in a ſimilar manner, and continued ſo 'till the third day, after which time it remained open.

that there would be a new moon the next day, February 4th. The difficulty which ſhe found in getting the almanack out of her pocket, aroſe in a great meaſure from the ſtiffneſs of her frozen clothes before mentioned. The trouble however was compenſated by the conſolation, which the proſpect of ſo near a change in her favour afforded. She makes no ſcruple to ſay, that ſhe perfectly diſtinguiſhed the alterations of day and night; heard the bells of her own, and ſome of the neighbouring villages, ſeveral different times, particularly that of Cheſterton,* was ſenſible of the living ſcene around her, frequently noticing the ſound of carriages upon the road, the natural cries of animals, ſuch as the bleating of ſheep and lambs and the barking of dogs. One day ſhe overheard a converſation carried on by two gypſies, relative to an aſs which they had loſt. She afterwards ſpecified, it was not their aſſes in general terms, that they were talking about, but ſome particular one, and her preciſion in this reſpect has been confirmed by

* Cheſterton bell rings every night at 8 o'clock, and 4 in the morning, during the winter-half of the year, Sundays excepted, and is at the diſtance of nearly two miles from the place where ſhe ſat.

the acknowledgement of the gypſies themſelves. She recollects having pulled out her ſnuff-box and taken two pinches of ſnuff; but, what is very ſtrange, ſhe felt ſo little gratification from it, that ſhe never repeated it. A common obſerver would have imagined the irritation ariſing from the ſnuff would have been peculiarly grateful to her, and that being deprived of all other comforts, ſhe would have ſolaced herſelf with thoſe which the box afforded, 'till the contents of it were exhauſted. Poſſibly however the cold ſhe endured might have ſo far blunted her powers of ſenſation, that the ſnuff no longer retained its ſtimulus. At another time finding her left hand beginning to ſwell in conſequence of her reclining for a conſiderable time on that arm, ſhe took two rings, the tokens of her nuptial vows twice pledged, from her finger, and put them, together with a little money which ſhe had in her pocket, into a ſmall box; ſenſibly judging, that ſhould ſhe not be found alive, the rings and money, being thus depoſited, were leſs likely to be overlooked by the diſcoverers of her breathleſs corpſe. She frequently ſhouted out, in hopes that her vociferations reaching the ears of any that chanced to paſs that way, they might be drawn to the

ſpot where ſhe was. But the ſnow ſo far prevented the tranſmiſſion of her voice, that no one heard her. The gypſies, who paſſed nearer to her than any other perſons, were not ſenſible of any ſound proceeding from her ſnow-formed cavern, though ſhe particularly endeavoured to attract their attention.

The picture, which her fancy preſented to her, of the diſtreſs which her loſs would occaſion to her family, conſiſting of her huſband and four children, and one of thoſe a ſuckling (two years and a half old) at the breaſt, very frequently recurred. It was however too painful to dwell upon; and leſt ſhe ſhould be overwhelmed with grief, ſhe had recourſe to heaven for comfort, and poured out her ſoul in fervent ſupplication to that Being, of whom it is ſaid with equal pathos and truth, that "He ſhall deliver the poor when he crieth, the needy alſo, and him that hath no helper." Pſalm lxxii. 12. It was a very curious and ſurpriſing circumſtance, that the ſenſation of hunger ceaſed almoſt entirely after the firſt day. Thirſt indeed was throughout her predominant feeling, which happily for her ſhe had the moſt plentiful means of allaying, by ſucking the ſurrounding ſnow. In ſome meaſure indeed ſnow

may be conſidered, to a perſon in her ſituation, as meat and drink; ſhe was compelled to uſe it for both, and no doubt it contributed to her ſuſtentation and the prolongation of her life. As to the time of her confinement, it appears, by a circumſtance to be mentioned in the hiſtory of her liberation, that ſhe was perfectly apprized of its duration: but ſhe ſays it did not appear upon the whole ſo tediouſly long as might, in all reaſon, have been expected; except towards the laſt, when it ſeemed to paſs more ſlowly than before. When the period of her ſecluſion approached to a termination, and a thaw took place on the Friday after the commencement of her misfortunes, ſhe felt uncommonly faint and languid; her clothes were wet quite through by the melted ſnow; the aperture before mentioned became conſiderably enlarged, and tempted her to make an effort to releaſe herſelf; but, alas! it was a vain attempt: her ſtrength was too much impaired; her feet and legs were no longer obedient to her will; and her clothes were become very much heavier by the water which they had imbibed. And now, for the firſt time, ſhe began to deſpair of ever being diſcovered or taken out alive; and declares, that all things conſidered, ſhe could not have ſurvived a continuation of her

ſufferings for the ſpace of twenty-four hours longer. It was now that the morning of her emancipation was arrived, her ſufferings increaſed, ſhe ſat with one of her hands ſpread over her face, and fetched the deepeſt ſighs, her breath was ſhort and difficult, and ſymptoms of approaching diſſolution became every hour more alarming. And here let the reader pauſe a moment, to contemplate the deplorable condition of this poor woman in this comfortleſs and apparently deſperate ſituation. Relief, if it did not come ſoon, ſhe knew would come too late. She ſaw no proſpect of its arrival. Her ſchemes for attracting the obſervation of any accidental paſſenger had hitherto proved abortive; ſhe feared that they would not now ſucceed. It is at this inſtant that the circumſtance which effected her liberation appears ſingular and wonderful. To thoſe who really believe in the interpoſition of Providence in the arrangement of human events, and much more to ſuch as are convinced of his perpetual agency in every incident that befalls his creatures, it will be thought by no means improper to apply the epithet Providential to her preſervation in this critical juncture, when all human aid ſeemed to be withdrawn, and death to menace the acceleration of his final blow.

It will form, however, the third diviſion of this eventful ſtory to deſcribe the particulars of that happy alleviation of her ſorrows, her diſcovery, and liberation. On Sunday the 10th of February, a young farmer, whoſe name is Joſeph Muncey, in his way home from Cambridge, about half paſt twelve o'clock, croſſed over the open field, and paſſed very near the ſpot where the woman was. A coloured handkerchief, hanging upon the tops of the twigs, where it was before ſaid ſhe had ſuſpended it, caught his eye: he walked up to the place, and eſpied an opening in the ſnow. It was the very aperture which led to the priſoner's apartment.* He heard a ſound iſſue from it, ſimilar to that of a perſon breathing hard and with difficulty. He looked in, and ſaw a female figure, whom he recognized at once to be the identical woman who had been ſo long miſſing. He did not ſpeak to her, but ſeeing another young farmer and the ſhepherd at a little diſtance, he communicated to them the diſcovery he had made. Upon which, though they ſcarcely gave any credit to his report, they went with him to the ſpot. The

* This apartment, as I have termed it, was ſufficiently large to afford the woman ſpace enough to move herſelf about three or four inches in any direction, but not to ſtand upright, being only about three feet and a half in height, and about two in the broadeſt part.

ſhepherd called out, "Are you there, Elizabeth Woodcock?" ſhe replied, in a faint and feeble accent, "Dear John Stittle, I know your voice, for God's ſake help me out of this place." Every effort was immediately made to comply with her requeſt. Stittle made his way through the ſnow 'till he was able to reach her; ſhe eagerly graſped his hand, and implored him not to leave her. "I have been here a long time," ſhe obſerved. "Yes," anſwered the man, "ever ſince Saturday." "Aye, Saturday week," ſhe replied. "I have heard the bells go two Sundays for church." An obſervation which demonſtrably proves how well apprized ſhe was of the duration of her confinement. Mr. Muncey and Mr. Merrington junior, during this converſation, were gone to the village to inform the huſband, and to procure proper means for conveying her home. They quickly returned, in company with her huſband, ſome of the neighbours, and the elder Mr. Merrington, who brought with him his horſe and chaiſe-cart, blankets to wrap her in, and ſome refreſhment, which he took it for granted ſhe would ſtand in peculiar need of.

The ſnow being a little more cleared away, Mr. M. went up to her, and upon her entreaty

gave her a piece of biſcuit and a ſmall quantity of brandy; from both ſhe found herſelf greatly recruited: as he took her up to put her into the chaiſe, the ſtocking of the left leg, adhering to the ground, came off. She fainted in his arms, notwithſtanding he moved her with all the caution in his power. But nature was very much exhauſted, and the motion, added to the impreſſion which the ſight of her huſband and neighbours made upon her, was too much for her ſtrength and ſpirits: the fit, however, was but of ſhort continuance, and when ſhe recovered, he laid her gently in his carriage, covered her well up in the blankets, and conveyed her without delay or interruption to her own houſe.

The reader may now wiſh to be informed how it is to be accounted for, that ſhe was not found ſooner, and what means were put in practice, though in vain, for her diſcovery. "Tinker," it will be recollected, the poor woman ſaid to her horſe, when ſhe ſat down behind the thicket, "I am too much tired to go any farther, you muſt go home without me." The faithful quadruped obeyed her orders, and went home without delay. Upon his coming to the gate which leads to the ſtable, farmer Woodcock heard him,

and went out inſtantly, expecting to find his wife, and to welcome her home after her cold and diſagreeable journey. I ſhall not attempt to paint the poor man's diſappointment at ſeeing the horſe without her. He was too prudent however to loſe his time in fruitleſs and unavailing lamentation. He deemed it much wiſer to uſe his beſt endeavours to find out where ſhe was. Accordingly he ſet out, with another perſon, taking a lantern with them, on the road leading to Cambridge. Special enquiry was made of every one whom they chanced to meet, whether they had ſeen or heard any thing of neighbour Woodcock; but they were not able to learn any tidings of her. Several times they ſhouted out her name, but no anſwer was made. They continued their ſearch as far as Cambridge, when they were informed that ſhe had left her inn about ſix o'clock in the evening. Returning upon this intelligence, they explored the road afreſh that night, and early the next morning renewed the painful but neceſſary taſk. They confined their ſearch chiefly, perhaps too much, to the public road, but they could diſcern no trace where ſhe might have left it, and knew not where to turn off to the right or left, or to what extent. Four days the ſearch was continued with little or no intermiſſion; not only by the

poor man and the perſon who firſt accompanied him, but by ſeveral others who kindly volunteered their ſervices on this intereſting occaſion. But no regular ſearch was carried on beyond the 4th day, though every neighbour had of courſe the thoughts of her full in his mind, and when he went out, looked about, wiſhing to have it in his power to announce the anxiouſly expected intelligence; but all was equally unavailing, and terminated alike in the fruſtration of their hopes. It was ſtrongly ſuſpected that ſome gypſies, who lay near the road, had robbed and murdered her. Their miſerable tents were twice examined, but no veſtige was there of any thing which could lead to a detection of their ſuppoſed villainy. Upon experiencing therefore nothing but reiterated diſappointments, the huſband had, for ſome time previous to her being found, reſigned himſelf to his misfortune, and waited with all the patience he was maſter of until a thaw ſhould come on, which he thought would lead to a diſcovery of her, wherever ſhe might be. In common with all his neighbours and friends, he had concluded that her death was a circumſtance that might be taken for an indiſputable certainty. The event however ſhews how well he would have been employed in perſiſting in his ſearch of her, and how much too

ſoon he deſpaired of her life. If the loſs of a perſon, ſimilar to that which we have now related, ſhould happen within the knowledge of any into whoſe hands this narrative may fall, he will purſue a courſe of enquiry conſiderably different from that obſerved in this caſe. He will particularly ſeek for the largeſt accumulations of ſnow in the vicinity of the loſt perſon's uſual place of reſidence, and direct his examination, with the moſt careful accuracy, to any aperture which may be diſcerned in any part of them: on no account forgetting to ſcrutinize, with increaſed diligence, ſuch maſſes as he finds collected about trees, hedges, or buſhes. Had that been thought of in the preſent inſtance, it is extremely probable that this diſtreſſed female might have been ſpared many hours, nay days, of her ſolitary and wretched ſecluſion, and have been reſtored to her family with far leſs perſonal injury than ſhe has now unhappily ſuſtained. In caſe ſhe had been found in a ſtate of inſenſibility, there was ſtill room to hope, that the vital ſpark, though it might exhibit no ſymptoms of its exiſtence, was not yet irrecoverably extinguiſhed. It might have been truly ſaid, " Forſan ſcintillula latet." It is a melancholy conſideration, but it will ſcarcely admit of a doubt, that numbers of perſons

undergoing a temporary ſuſpenſion of their vital powers from cold as well as other cauſes, have been loſt, by not having recourſe to, and frequently for want of perſeverance in, the uſe of ſuch means as would have reſtored them to ſociety. The hiſtory of the numerous inſtances of perſons who in this ſituation have been recovered by the gentlemen of the Humane Society, and others who have put in practice the admirable methods recommended by them, ſufficiently evinces the probability of this. The bare poſſibility indeed of E. W.'s life being ſaved, even after ſhe had been miſſing four or five days, ought to have prevented her huſband and friends from leaving her reſtoration, as they did, to mere accident. Had Mr. Muncey jun. taken a different route, or not ſtopped, as he did, to view the hole he deſcried in the ſnow, ſhe would probably have periſhed. We would, therefore, very earneſtly recommend the hints which this ſingular caſe ſuggeſts to every one, who may have reaſon to ſuſpect that any of his fellow creatures is in the ſame dreadful predicament with this woman. By due attention to them, ſome valuable lives may eventually be preſerved to ſociety, and to numbers to whom their loſs might be irreparably ſevere. If even one life ſhould owe its preſervation to what has been here

obſerved, it will amply repay the writer for his trouble of drawing up this account. And that fortunate perſon, to whoſe lot it may fall to ſave from a ſtate of impending deſtruction any individual of the human ſpecies, will congratulate himſelf upon the opportunity he enjoyed of peruſing theſe ſheets, and the uſe he was enabled to make of the intimations here given. This will be one uſeful improvement of the narration now laid before the public; and we hope every reader will ſtrenuouſly and joyfully avail himſelf of it. Another obſervation, with which, I truſt, it will be allowable to detain the reader, ſhall be relative to the ſurpriſing circumſtance of the ſurvival of a human being, for ſeven days and ſeventeen hours, with no other nouriſhment than what could be derived from the ſnow. It will be recollected, that it was ſaid that E. W. had a baſket with her, when ſhe purſued her horſe over the open field beyond Burton Hedges. But ſhe had let it drop, through fatigue, before ſhe had reached the ſpot where ſhe ſat down. She was perfectly ſenſible where it was, and deſcribed its ſituation ſo accurately, that in ſearching for it afterwards, it was found where ſhe mentioned; but at ſuch a diſtance, however, from the place where ſhe was detained, and ſo incloſed and locked up, as it were, in the ſnow, that it was

totally out of her power to get to it, or to procure any part of its contents. It is very certain then that ſhe owed her ſubſiſtence to no other natural means than the ſnow. Another reflection cannot but occur to every reader, upon the moſt curſory peruſal of what has been ſaid; and this reſpects the great danger there is of traveling late in the evening of the ſhort days, eſpecially in the moſt ſevere weather of the winter ſeaſon. Prudence, and a regard for her own ſafety, ought ſurely to have prevented E. W. venturing from home on ſo bad a day. Or if ſhe thought it abſolutely neceſſary to go,* it would have been a much better plan to have taken ſome perſon with her, or have contrived to accompany ſome of her towns-people both to and from Cambridge. But without any heſitation or precautions of this kind, ſhe ſet out, though of a ſlender, delicate make, to ride alone, two miles at leaſt, to market, along an uneven road, on a day too, one of the moſt cold, ſnowy, and tempeſtuous that, perhaps, was almoſt ever known in this climate. On her return ſhe was encumbered with a buſhel

* "Sive Aquilo radit terras ſeu bruma nivalem
"Interiore Diem Gyro trahit, ire neceſſe eſt."
Hor. Sat. 6. B. 2.

of coals and a large baſket, and did not ſet out homewards till it was ſo late that upon her leaving Cambridge the evening was cloſing faſt around her. It is indeed much eaſier to animadvert upon the raſhneſs and folly of any undertaking when the iſſue of it turns out diſaſtrous and unfortunate, than it is to ſee the conſequences before they have taken place. But foreſight is a power which as rational creatures we poſſeſs in an eminent degree, we ought not on any account therefore to forego this honourable privelege, and act only upon the ſpur of preſent impulſe. There was in this caſe, as in moſt others, a poſſibility if not a probability of her getting home again ſafe and well, and this probability was in her eſtimation, and would have been ſo in that of many others, ſufficient to outweigh the proſpect of all the perils which due conſideration would have preſented to her view. Her misfortune, however, will we hope operate as a warning to all in circumſtances ſimilar or approaching to a ſimilarity with her's. Though we ought not at any time to feign imaginary dangers, or even regard real ones, where the object we have in view is of conſiderable importance; yet in the ordinary courſe of things, where a journey, for inſtance, is not of ſuch urgent and preſſing neceſſity as to render the procraſtination

of a day or two inadmiſſible, we ought to weigh well the difficulties and dangers we are likely to encounter, and not ruſh precipitately into them. Unleſs ſuch precaution be taken, it may be ſaid, without harſhneſs or breach of charity, that we deſerve, in ſome degree, the misfortunes to which we are acceſſary by our want of diſcretion. It muſt however be obſerved, that during the whole time of her confinement, E. W. exerciſed the greateſt patience and reſignation, and has done the ſame invariably ſince. Let any perſon imagine himſelf in her condition, and aſk himſelf in what manner he thinks he ſhould have felt diſpoſed and affected. We confeſs, for our own part, we ſhould have thought, that the repeated reflections of any perſon in ſuch a ſituation, upon his own ſad ſtate, and the idea of that conſternation and diſtreſs into which his family muſt be thrown, together with the apprehenſion of a ſlow and lingering death, without the proſpect of human aſſiſtance, and the great probability, if he ſhould be diſcovered, that it might be too late to preſerve life, and perhaps only the means of protracting his ſufferings, would have abſolutely driven him to diſtraction. This poor woman, on the contrary, " poſſeſſed her ſoul in patience," dwelt little upon her own misfortune, and with

aſtoniſhing compoſure commended herſelf to the mercy of Providence, and humbly left the diſpoſal of the event to his wiſdom. Such have been the ſufferings of this poor woman, that a very general ſentiment of compaſſion on her behalf, has been awakened amongſt all ranks of people to whom the knowledge of it has come. And it is to be hoped that this detail of her afflictions will ſtimulate a generous and benevolent public to contribute bountifully to the alleviation of thoſe heavy expences, which proper attendance, independent of many other demands, muſt render it indiſpenſably neceſſary for her to incur. The loſs, too, which her family has experienced, and ſtill experiences, in being deprived of her care, ſuperintendence and induſtry, may fairly plead as another circumſtance tending to render any relief which the humane may be induced to afford her, the more beneficial and acceptable.

PART II.

THE Journals of voyagers in the northern climates furniſh us with but too many inſtances of the powerful effects of cold on the human body, and numberleſs ones alſo of life being preſerved under a very ſhort and ſcanty allowance of food.

Thoſe perſons likewiſe who are converſant in the care of lunatics have frequent opportunities of obſerving what intenſity of cold the human frame can occaſionally reſiſt, and that the exiſtence of man may be prolonged for a very conſiderable time under an almoſt total abſtinence from every thing which, to common obſervers, ſeems neceſſary for its ſupport.

A caſe is recorded in the 27th vol. of the Philoſophical Tranſactions, page 266, of a woman at Chardſtock in Dorſetſhire, who, having remained ſix days covered with ſnow without receiving any the leaſt nouriſhment, was, at the expiration of that time, taken from it alive, and ſuffered no other injury than the mortification of a little toe.

A Gentleman reſident in Devonſhire has favoured me with an account of two perſons who were covered up in the ſnow for a much longer time and afterwards taken out of it alive; one of them, a female, who preſerved herſelf by ſucking the oil from ſome unwrought wool; the other a young man who was under the ſnow 14 days, had received no other ſuſtenance than what he obtained from drinking ſome water which was near the place of his confinement; nor did he recollect that even once, during the time of that confinement, he had any ſleep.

ELIZABETH WOODCOCK, whoſe caſe will be the ſubject of the following pages, was covered up under the ſnow, without taking either ſolid food or drink, for the ſpace of eight days; and though this is a much ſhorter period than thoſe juſt now mentioned, yet the hiſtory of theſe eight days is ſo accurately detailed to us, and the effects of intenſe cold upon the human body, with the appearances of returning health, have ſo ſtrongly pointed out the proper mode of treating ſuch caſes, that this publication will perhaps be found not entirely unuſeful; even if in the *medical* treatment, nothing new ſhould be found, it will at leaſt be an

additional reaſon why, in caſes of perſons being thus loſt, the purſuit ought never to be given up, under the idea of their having periſhed from being ſo long ſubject to the extreme cold of the ſnow which incloſes them.

As Mr. Holme, who is the officiating clergyman at Impington, the pariſh in which E. Woodcock lives, and to whoſe humanity ſhe is very greatly indebted, has given a very accurate account of her being loſt, of the circumſtances which happened during her confinement under the ſnow, and of her being at laſt found again, as detailed in the firſt part of this pamphlet, it only remains for me to relate what ſhe has ſuffered in conſequence of the long continued application of intenſe cold, abſolute incapability of motion, total abſtinence from food, and almoſt total deprivation of ſleep—I ſay, I have only to relate theſe, unleſs indeed I may be allowed to add, that I have no doubt of the truth of all the facts collected by Mr. Holme; for I ſaw her almoſt immediately after ſhe was taken from the ſnow; and I ſaw alſo the place from which ſhe was dug, as well as her baſket containing the articles ſhe had bought at Cambridge eight

days before, and which a man told me he had dug out of the ſnow at ſome diſtance from the place where ſhe had been ſitting through the time of her confinement; I have ſeen alſo the dreadful effects of the cold upon her frame, and have, during a very long attendance upon her (from Feb. the 10th to April the 17th, in which interval ſhe has been viſited either by myſelf or my pupil near 50 times) heard her conſtantly repeat the ſame circumſtances without the leaſt variation; her own relation of them being always clear and without any art.—If her tale had been a falſe one, I think that in the long continuance of fever and the extreme and almoſt ceaſeleſs agonies ſhe ſuffered for ſo many weeks from the mortification of her feet, ſhe would, at intervals, have been put off her guard; but neither myſelf, nor my pupil, have ever diſcovered any thing like falſehood in the anſwers given by her to our repeated queſtions relating to this moſt extraordinary event.

CASE.

ELIZABETH WOODCOCK is now (April 17, 1799,) about 42 years of age; has been the mother of ſeveral children by her firſt huſband; and has

alſo one near two years and a half old by her ſecond huſband, which ſhe ſuckled at the time of her being loſt; her ſtature is rather low, her eyes black, and her complexion ſallow with a reddiſh tint on her cheeks; and, though ſhe is of but a thin habit, has enjoyed, upon the whole, very good health.

I ſaw her firſt on Sunday, (Feb. the 10th,) in a cart, when her neighbours were removing her to her home, ſoon after her being taken out of the ſnow.—As I had frequently been at her houſe before this event, ſhe knew me inſtantly, and calling me by my name, ſpoke with a voice tolerably ſtrong, though rather hoarſe. I obſerved that her hands and arms were *ſodden* but not very cold; nor did the ſtate of her pulſe indicate ſo much debility as from her ſituation might have been expected; but it is nevertheleſs poſſible that her pulſe at this time might be quickened and ſtrengthened by the pleaſure of again ſeeing the ſun and beholding the countenances of her ſurrounding friends;—her legs were cold and her feet in a great meaſure mortified. I directed that ſhe ſhould be put into bed without delay, and take ſmall quantities of weak broth occaſionally, but not ſo frequently as to overload the ſtomach—

alſo that ſhe ſhould not have any ſtrong drink nor be brought near to any fire.

I viſited her again on Monday the 11th, when ſhe gave me a general account of what had paſſed during her confinement; but as many perſons had come to ſee her, and were continually in her room, I forbore to harraſs her by aſking any more than neceſſary queſtions.—She told me, that from the time of her being loſt ſhe had eaten nothing but portions of the ſnow which ſurrounded her, and believed that ſhe had not ſlept till Friday the 8th.

At various times ſhe made water, but not in great quantities; no evacuation from her bowels had taken place; very little milk had been in her breaſts for a long time before the accident; and, whilſt ſhe was buried in the ſnow, there was none at all.

From the hurry of ſpirits occaſioned by too many viſitors, and from her having taken nouriſhing broths, &c. in greater quantities than I had directed, ſhe ſeemed to have feveriſh ſymptoms coming on very faſt—the pulſe was riſing, her face was flushed and her breathing was ſhorter than it ought to be.—The greateſt part of both

feet I now diſcovered to be in a ſtate of complete mortification, which unhappy circumſtance was occaſioned by their being froſtbitten before ſhe was covered with ſnow. Her ancles were cold and benumbed, and the integuments felt puffy; nor could I, for this reaſon, determine preciſely the extent of the mortification. I ordered that her feet might be wrapped up in linen cloths wetted with brandy, and that this application ſhould be frequently renewed; her lips and tongue, I found, had ſuffered very much from the cold, and were very ſore. I found alſo, that though ſhe had made water ſince ſhe returned home, ſhe had experienced no other evacuation. Medicines were now adminiſtered to keep off the fever; and in the evening ſhe took ſome opium. I gave a ſtrict charge for her being kept quiet, and requeſted that ſhe might be fed only with very weak broth.

Tueſday the 12th.—Great numbers of people had been and were then pouring into the houſe to viſit and talk with her; which circumſtance adding much to the natural effects of returning warmth in her habit, produced ſo violent a fever that I began to have but little hopes of her recovery;—her pulſe was now quick and full; her

breathing was ſhort and laborious; her face and neck were of a deep red colour; her ſkin was hot and dry, her tongue parched; and ſhe complained of an exceſſive pain in her body and head. She had no ſleep in the night, and could not take nouriſhment of any kind.

I directed a clyſter of mutton broth to be adminiſtered immediately; ſome ſaline mixture with antimonial wine to be given to her at proper intervals; and a doſe of opium at night. I ordered moreover that ſhe ſhould take ſome ſtrong decoction of bark as ſoon as the clyſter had operated, and the heat and fever began to abate. Very large veſications were formed on her feet, and from the puffy feel and coldneſs of the integuments above the ancles, I ſuſpected that the mortification had reached to thoſe parts alſo.

Wedneſday the 13th.—The clyſter having produced a very large evacuation of hardened fæces, and the pain of her body being immediately relieved and the fever being alſo very much gone off, the bark was given to her in large quantities as often as her ſtomach would bear it, and one grain of opium thrice in the day. I opened the veſications on the feet and continued the uſe of the brandy as at firſt.

Thurſday the 14th.—She was extremely weak and low, and her voice, from hoarſeneſs and debility, could ſcarcely be heard; the fatigue ſhe underwent in ſeeing company and anſwering the enquiries of thoſe perſons whom curioſity had drawn to her houſe, and her being able to take but little nouriſhment, made me almoſt deſpair of her recovery. I perſuaded her to drink ſome port wine which Mr. Holme was ſo good as to ſend her; but the ſoreneſs of her mouth cauſed her to take it with great unwillingneſs. The bark happily agreed very well with her, and the opium ſeemed to produce the beſt poſſible effects; I therefore deſired that ſhe would take a pill of one grain, at any time when ſhe was in pain or even reſtleſs. Her body being uneaſy, I ordered a clyſter of mutton broth to be given, and the feet to be wrapped up in warm cataplaſms of ſtale beer and oatmeal.

In the evening, the pain of her body increaſing and the firſt clyſter not coming away, I directed a ſecond to be adminiſtered and a mixture of oil and manna to be taken occaſionally.—I ordered alſo the opium to be continued.

Friday morning the 15th.—Being very low and weak ſhe could not change her poſture in bed

without the aſſiſtance of two perſons; one of whom was employed in moving her body, and the other had the care of ſhifting her feet; which becoming very ſore appeared alſo to be heavy and unwieldy. No evacuation of her body had taken place ſince Tueſday, and ſhe had made no water for forty-eight hours, ſo that ſhe was in great pain. Her pulſe was now very languid, her voice weak, and every other ſymptom of general debility but too apparent. I adviſed her to take the port wine more frequently, and to have another clyſter.—The feet, however, notwithſtanding the other ſymptoms of extreme weakneſs, looked better than I expected; the mortified parts began to crack at the edges, and I could ſee how far up the limb the mortification would extend, though I could not determine the depth of it. It appeared, however, that the cold had extended its violent effects from the end of the toes to the middle of the inſtep, including more than an inch above the heels and all the bottoms of the feet, for thus far had the mortification extended. The ſmell of her feet now became extremely offenſive, though the nurſes had, by changing the poultices thrice in the day, leſſened it as much as poſſible. The patient ſaid, the only comfort ſhe experienced was from the *pills*, and the renewal of very hot

poultices; theſe were made with ſtale beer and oatmeal boiled together. For the laſt two days ſhe complained very much of cold (" inward cold" ſhe called it) and wine, though taken very hot, rum and water, and an additional quantity of blankets did not ſeem to remove it. Opium was now adminiſtered in doſes of two grains thrice in the day.

Friday Evening.—The clyſters having produced two or three evacuations, had made her very low, indeed it was with great difficulty ſhe could be kept from fainting as ſhe lay in the bed; but having at my requeſt taken ſome ſago with wine and a few ſpoonfuls of a cordial mixture now and then, with the uſual doſe of opium, ſhe had more ſleep than could have been expected.

Saturday 16th.—She was more revived, made water freely, but with pain, and had a relaxed ſtool in the evening. Opium and wine were given to her as yeſterday, but no bark.

Sunday 17th.—The mortified parts were extremely offenſive, and I removed a large quantity of integuments which hung looſe at the bottoms of her feet; ſhe requeſted that the cataplaſms

might be renewed *as often as poſſible*, and applied *very warm*, which was done three times in the day. She continued very weak and low (that is) as to bodily ſtrength, but her mind was very calm, and ſhe endured her pain and illneſs with moſt wonderful fortitude.

The tincture of bark was now given her as often as ſhe could be perſuaded to take Medicine, but her ſupport was the opium, wine, and broth; of the former ſhe took one grain and a half, three or four times in the day.

Monday 18th.—There was very little change of ſymptoms; the mortified parts became continually looſe, and in order to leſſen the ſtench, as much of them as was looſe was removed.—The bark now became ſo unpleaſant to her that ſhe could not be perſuaded to take it; the opium was adminiſtered as before; her bowels were in a better ſtate than they had been, but ſhe ſtill complained as before of " inward cold."

Tueſday 19th, and Wedneſday 20th.—She was ſeized with violent diarrhœa, which occaſioned great debility; a cordial mixture therefore was ordered; but ſhe ſeemed to receive no benefit

from any thing but *opium*, of which ſhe had taken two grains every three or four hours for two days and nights.

Thurſday 21ſt, and Friday 22d.—The diarrhœa was much abated, and ſeveral toes were ſo looſe that I eaſily removed them with the ſciſſars.

Saturday 23d.—It was not thought neceſſary to give the doſes of opium ſo frequently; a return of the difficulty of making water, though to no great degree, took place, but it ſoon went off again. I perſuaded her to try to be taken out of bed for the firſt time, which ſhe did, and happily was removed without fainting. From Monday 25th, to Tueſday March 14th, ſhe continued rather to gain ſtrength, and the ſloughs to looſen in different parts. I removed all the toes, and *took away all the integuments from the bottom of one foot*, excepting a piece at the heel which was ſo long ere it looſened itſelf that I feared the Os Calcis and the Tendo Achillis had ſuffered, which proved to be the caſe. The ſloughs on the other foot were thrown off more ſlowly, from which only the ſkin and two of the leſſer toes had been removed.

The bark had now become ſo diſagreeable to her that I could only perſuade her to take now and then a little of the tincture in ſome water; of opium ſhe took conſtantly a grain and a half thrice in the day.

Her bowels were in a good ſtate, but ſhe had not much reliſh as yet for meat; ſhe however took ſtrong broth in large quantities, and milk porridge, and drank now and then ſome wine and ale.

To March 14th ſhe continued much the ſame; the ſloughs were removed as faſt as they became looſe, and by the 17th all the toes of both feet came off except one great toe. I was very ſorry to find, upon removing the ſloughs from the heels, that the os calcis of each foot was bare in many parts; all that part of each foot where the mortification had taken place was now one exceedingly large ſore, and very tender; and, from its ſituation, ſhe was unable to bear removal except from the bed to the chair, and ſit till the bed was made; for after ſhe had been ſitting a ſhort time her feet became ſo extremely painful that ſhe could endure no poſture but an horizontal one. At the latter end of March the ſores much diminiſhed in

extent, and I took off the remaining toe. About this time ſhe was ſeized with unuſual ſleepineſs, which gave her attendants no ſmall alarm; ſhe ſlept almoſt conſtantly night and day, for three or four days, and they were ſcarcely able to keep her awake to take food, her pulſe was very weak and low, and greater ſigns of debility were manifeſt at this period than there had been for ſome weeks paſt, but ſhe ſeemed to be relieved by the uſe of warm and camphorated medicines; her appetite was but very ſmall, and ſhe was frequently troubled with pain in her body from coſtiveneſs and ſuppreſſion of urine.

April 17th.—The ſores were now free from ſloughs, and became evidently leſs every day; her appetite is tolerably good, and her general health has begun to amend; but with all theſe circumſtances in her favour, ſhe feels herſelf to be very uncomfortable, and in fact her proſpect is moſt miſerable. True it is that her life is ſaved; but the mutilated ſtate in which ſhe is left, without even a chance of ever being able to attend to the duties of her family, is almoſt worſe than death itſelf; for from the expoſure of the os calcis in all probability it will not be till after ſome months that the bottoms of her feet can be covered with new ſkin;

and after all, whenever this event takes place, they will be ſo tender as not to bear any preſſure; the loſs too of all her toes muſt make it impoſſible for her to move herſelf but with the aſſiſtance of crutches.

It will probably be expected that I ſhould ſay ſomething relative to her being able to remain alive ſo long without ſleep or food, in the uncomfortable ſituation which has been already deſcribed.

In the former pages it has been mentioned that I have not the ſmalleſt doubt of the accuracy of her ſtatement of particular facts, and indeed every circumſtance of this buſineſs that has come to my knowledge, confirms me in my perſuaſion of the truth of the whole, even that part which ſeems moſt improbable, namely, her not having ſlept until Friday the 8th*; and to her continuing without ſleep, I think I may venture to aſſert the preſervation of her life may more immediately be

* In the hiſtory of the young man in Devonſhire, who was buried ſo long under the ſnow, it may be recollected that he ſaid, according to his belief he did not ſleep at all during the 14 days of his confinement.

attributed. Every one who has read the accounts given by travellers, of what has fallen under their notice in the more northern climates, muſt remember that one effect produced by intenſe cold is a ſtrong propenſity to ſleep, which, if indulged, terminates invariably in death; but if I am not miſtaken, this propenſity to ſleep comes not on till the actual perception of ſevere cold has been experienced. It is ſaid that intenſe cold, by diminiſhing the force of the circulation through the arteries upon the ſurface, throws too great a quantity of blood upon the head, which is aſſigned by ſome as the cauſe of that drowſineſs which has juſt now been noticed. But as Eliz. Woodcock (as ſhe has repeatedly aſſerted) felt no cold either before her confinement under the ſnow, or indeed afterwards except in *her feet only*; may it not be concluded that as ſhe was at all times generally warm in every other part of her frame, ſhe by this circumſtance eſcaped that drowſineſs, the effect of which has been ſo remarkably deſtructive to thoſe perſons who have been attacked by it.

Her life ſeems to have been preſerved too in ſome degree by her having had no evacuation from the bowels during eight days; ſhe made

but very little urine during this time, and we may reaſonably think that perſpiration was not carried on in a very great degree. If great evacuations either by ſtool or urine had taken place when no food could poſſibly be obtained, death muſt have been the immediate and inevitable conſequence; but as in the torpid ſtate in which ſhe remained there was no exertion of body which could waſte the frame, life probably might have been prolonged to her for a much more extended period than that of her confinement; very little ſuſtenance being neceſſary (at leaſt for ſome time) to the continuation of our exiſtence without actions.

The ſtate of her mind throughout the whole of this very ſingular occurrence appears to have been well adapted to the trials ſhe underwent; the reſignation with which ſhe ſat down when her horſe had left her, and her examination of the almanac when ſhe wiſhed to know the time of the change of the moon, are ſuch proofs of compoſure as few perſons would have poſſeſſed in ſo alarming a ſituation, and doubtleſs aſſiſted in a very eminent degree to prevent an unneceſſary waſte of ſtrength.

The facts before us ſeem ſtrong reaſons for

enforcing the directions given by the Humane Society, and agreed on by all medical men, as to the treatment of perſons ſuffering from intenſe cold, or long abſtinence from food.

The application of heat to the human body after intenſe cold, is attended with the moſt dreadful conſequences; it always produces extreme pain, and moſt frequently either partial* or general mortification of the parts to which the heat is applied; inſtead therefore of allowing patients of this deſcription to come near a fire, let the limbs be rubbed well with ſnow, or if ſnow cannot be procured, let them be immerſed into cold water, and afterwards chafed with flannel for a conſiderable length of time; and to diminiſh the force of fever (which in the caſe of E. W. had nearly been fatal) let the party be reſtrained moſt cautiouſly from taking too much or too nutritious food; ſpirits likewiſe, or wine, ſhould on no pretence whatever be adminiſtered till they have firſt been copiouſly diluted with water.

* I forgot to mention in the firſt Edition, that ſoon after the violence of the fever had abated, there appeared all over E. W.'s body, arms and face, broad reddiſh blotches, which I judge to be from the ſame cauſe which produces Chilblains.

Great attention muſt be paid to the ſtate of the bowels, and in caſes of having ſuffered long abſtinence from food, clyſters of meat broth will be found to be in every reſpect of great utility.

The uſe of opium and camphor is much to be recommended, though perhaps it may be adviſable to give the opium at firſt in very ſmall doſes only.

The Peruvian Bark will certainly be found ſerviceable in the courſe of the cure in caſe of mortification, but I am inclined to be of opinion that it ought not to be directed till ſuppuration has come on.

Before I conclude, I beg to apologiſe for any incorrectneſs of language which may have eſcaped me in writing the preceding narrative.—My time being ſo much occupied by conſtant attention to the duties of a fatiguing profeſſion will plead my excuſe with the liberal reader, and defend me from the ſeverity of criticiſm. The ſubject requires rather to be written intelligibly than finely, and if I have ſucceeded in that particular, the public, I flatter myſelf, will conſider all other inaccuracies as pardonable.

29JY73